THE NEW BRITISH MUSEUM.

On the preceding page we place before our readers a perspective view of the entrance-front of the British Museum, now nearly completed. In the second volume of our journal a view was given of the old Museum, known as Montague House, together with some historical particulars.*

The order of architecture adopted throughout the exterior of the new building is the Grecian Ionic. The southern façade consists of the great entrance portico, eight columns in width, and two intercolumniations in projection. On either side is an advancing wing, giving to the entire front an extent of 370 feet, the whole of which is surrounded by a colonnade, consisting of forty-four columns, raised upon a stylobate five feet and a half high. The columns are five feet at their lower diameter, and forty-five feet high; the height from the pavement of the front courtyard to the top of the entablature of the colonnade, is sixty-six feet and a half.

The principal floor of the building is reached by a flight of twelve stone steps at the foot of the portico, one hundred and twenty-five feet in width, terminating on either side with pedestals intended to receive groups of sculpture.

The tympanum of the portico is proposed to be enriched with historical or allegorical sculpture in full relief, and colossal statues are to surmount the pediment. These are not yet executed.

The principal entrance to the museum under this portico is by a carved oak door, hung to a door-frame of stone, nine feet six inches wide, and twenty-four feet high, through which we shall pass next week, and give a view of the great hall and staircase.

The majority of our readers know that the Museum has been erected from the designs of Sir Robert Smirke, but that since 1846, in consequence of the ill-health of Sir Robert, his brother, Mr. Sydney Smirke, has been engaged in completing it.

RECOVERY OF EXPENSES INCURRED BY OVERSEERS IN PULLING DOWN RUINOUS STRUCTURES UNDER THE BUILDINGS ACT.

LAST week a case was heard at the Thames Police-office, arising out of a suit for the recovery of 13*l.* 16s. from Sarah Moncar, of Shipwrights'-terrace, Poplar, being the residue of expenses incurred by John Coombs, overseer of the parish of All Saints, Poplar, in respect of a certain building.

The defendant was the owner of a small tenement in a place called Cold Harbour, Blackwall, which has been for many years in a ruinous state, and was inspected by the district-surveyor so far back as 1845, when, it is stated, he reported to the official referees that it was in a dilapidated and dangerous condition, and that it was expedient and necessary that the building should be taken down, and a hoard put up for the safety of passengers. Nothing, however, was done beyond shoring up the building until February last, when, owing to repeated complaints from various persons, the law was set in motion and the Act was brought into operation. The defendant was first waited upon, and the ruinous and perilous condition of the building was fully represented, but without effect. The overseers, accompanied by the surveyor of pavements and the vestry-clerk, surveyed the premises on the 12th of February. The roof had then fallen, and the tenement was in the most dilapidated condition imaginable, and in danger of falling and burying the defendant, the only occupier, in the ruins. The next step was to send a notice to the official referee of metropolitan buildings, who gave Mr. Good, the district-surveyor, orders to make a survey, and he did so, and certified that the premises required to be wholly pulled down. After the various other formalities required by the Act, and a copy of the surveyor's report had been served on the overseers, a notice was served on the defendant to pull down the premises at the expiration of fourteen days from the date thereof. The defendant still refused, and after repeated notices had been given to her by Mr. Kemp, the overseers employed a builder to raze the building to the ground, caused the materials to be sold by public auction, and now sued the defendant for the balance of the expenses, amounting in all to 21*l.* Credit had been given to the defendant for 7*l.* 4s., the sum which the old materials realised by the sale, and proof was given that a formal demand of the balance now sued for had been made. The payment of the district surveyor's fees, auctioneer's expenses, the solicitor's costs, and the services of notices, &c., were proved by numerous witnesses, and there was no question raised by the defendant's solicitor as to the ruinous condition of the building. An objection was taken to the service of a notice, thrust through a broken window-pane, which was overruled. Likewise to the charge of a guinea made by Mr. Kemp, the vestry clerk, including 4s. for coach hire. It was said that Kemp was paid a salary, and it was part of his duty to advise the overseers, and that when he attended the court, or went to the premises in question, he was on parish duty. Mr. Kemp insisted that the duty was special, and had nothing to do with his appointment as vestry clerk, and that he laid out 10s. 6d. for coach hire and fees of court.—The magistrate was at first disposed only to allow Mr. Kemp the money he had actually expended, but finally waived the objection, and 21s. was awarded to him. He directed a warrant to issue to distrain the goods and chattels of the defendant for the sum claimed.

* In the same volume of THE BUILDER, p. 324 and p. 360, will be found two views of the entrance gateway, now about to be removed.

INSTITUTION OF CIVIL ENGINEERS.

LIGHT.

AT a meeting on April 17, Mr. R. Stephenson, M.P., in the chair, the paper read was, "On an application of certain Liquid Hydrocarbons to Artificial Illumination," by Mr. C. B. Mansfield, B.A. The paper first noticed that liquid hydrocarbons had been comparatively little used for the production of artificial light; and that in the instances in which they had been applied, their liquidity, and not their evaporability, had been turned to account.

The paper represented that a difficulty had been solved by the discovery of a liquid hydrocarbon as volatile as spirits of wine, but containing sufficient carbon for the most perfect light, and obtainable in any quantity. This hydrocarbon was procured from coal tar, and was called "Benzole." Its volatility was such as to enable it to napthalise atmospheric air as effectually as ordinary naptha did coal gas.

The system proposed by the author (which was illustrated in the room by a working apparatus) consisted in conducting a stream of almost any gas, or even of atmospheric air, through a reservoir charged with Benzole or some other equally volatile hydrocarbon; the gas or air so napthalised being then conducted like common coal gas through pipes to the burners. It was stated that the system was applicable on any scale, from the dimensions of town gas-works to the compass of a table lamp. In the apparatus exhibited, a small gas-holder, filled by a pair of bellows, supplied common air through pipes. The gases formed by passing steam over red-hot coke would answer well for this purpose, and it would depend on local circumstances whether this mode of generating the current would be preferable to the expenditure of the mechanical force necessary for driving atmospheric air through the pipes. Pure oxygen charged with the vapour would explode on ignition; it was therefore suggested that this might prove a useful source of motive force. The system was shewn to be a great simplification of the ordinary system of gas-lighting, as no retorts, refrigerators, purifiers, or meters were required, and the products of combustion were as pure as those from the finest wax.

The apparatus and conditions necessary for the success of the method were, a flow of cheap gas, or of air, driven through pipes by any known motive power, and a reservoir of the volatile spirit through which the main pipe must pass in some convenient part of its course; these pipes and reservoirs being protected from the cold.

It was stated that a gallon of Benzole, of the degree of purity requisite for the purpose, would cost about 2s. 6d.; to this, the expense of the air-current and the interest of the original outlay on apparatus, was to be added. This, the author presumed, would not raise the cost to more than 4s. for the consumption of a gallon of Benzole. It was stated that one ounce of that liquid would give a light equal to four wax candles of four to the pound, for one hour, or one gallon for about one hundred and twenty hours. It was inferred that a gallon of this material was equivalent to about 1,000 cubic feet of coal gas.

SCIENCE AND SCENERY AT HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE.

In the last scene of a beautiful ballet, called *Electra, or the Lost Pleiade*, played for the first time at Her Majesty's Theatre, on Tuesday night, an effect quite wonderful is obtained by the introduction of the electric light, opening new views in stage arrangements, and bearing strongly on some ideas as to the lighting of theatres expressed in a previous volume of our journal.

The story of the ballet is one that has often been used in other forms, and often will be.—It symbolises the struggle in man's mind between the *real* and the *ideal*,—the thought and the thing. We have only so much to say of it, however, as will serve to explain the particular incident in question: although looked at philosophically, a ballet is not without its teaching.

One of the *Pleiades* becomes enamoured of a mortal on the eve of his marriage, and leads to the struggle to which we have referred. By this act the Star is deprived of her station, but is ultimately forgiven and restored. The scene is a lake, in the bright moonlight, a charming piece of deception, by Mr. Charles Marshall: it changes to the Empyrean, the "highest Heaven" of the poets, where the pure element of fire is supposed to exist. The six *pleiades* rise amongst the clouds, with each her bright particular light, and the seventh, the forgiven, is then seen sailing up and forwards to the front of the stage, with a star so brilliant and far-piercing, that the gas, as sporting men say, is "no-where." Hyperbole apart, however, the effect when we saw it was very striking and very beautiful.

Some of the previous scenes and effects, a forest, and a Norwegian view with torrent and bridge, are creditable specimens of Mr. Marshall's art.

DILAPIDATIONS.

SHERIFFS' COURT.—*Birch* v. *Edgecumbe*.—This was an action to recover damages for dilapidations, &c., under peculiar circumstances. The facts were these:—The defendant took the premises, situate in St. Anne's, Soho, on a lease, in which was a covenant to keep the premises in repair. After being in possession four or five years, defendant set about performing some repairs, but in the hurry gave no notice to the district surveyor, and as the alterations were not in conformity with the new Building Act, and in consequence the house was condemned, and almost wholly pulled down, the expense in rebuilding was about 500*l.*, which was now sought to be recovered.

The Under-Sheriff (Mr. Burchell) said this was not a repairing lease, but the covenant was merely to keep in repair; that was, he was to keep it in repair according to the length of time he occupied, but not to make the house perfect.

Mr. Prentis, for the plaintiff, submitted that the damage had been wholly caused by defendant's negligence.

Mr. Wiltshire, surveyor, was called, and made a calculation that the house, if properly repaired, would have lasted for twenty-one years; but taking the difference of value in the old and present house, he thought 150*l.* a fair equivalent for the loss.

The jury, after a short consultation, gave a verdict for 150*l.* damages, and 20*l.* for rent—in all 170*l.*

THE NEW CITY PRISON AT HOLLOWAY.—We understand that the contract for the building of the new city prison at Holloway has been regularly signed by the contracting parties, and that operations are to commence on the ground. The first stone will be laid at Midsummer.

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